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Chairman: Mr. Bródi ..... (Hungary)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Ms. McLurg

Contents

Agenda item 118: Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council

Revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 3 and 32 related to the provision of an integrated headquarters facility for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, in Baghdad

Other matters

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 118: Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/63/346 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1 and Add.2-5 and A/63/593)

Revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 3 and 32 related to the provision of an integrated headquarters facility for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, in Baghdad (A/62/828; A/63/601)

1. **Ms. Van Buerle** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the Secretary-General's reports on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/63/346 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1 and Add.2-5) and revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 3 and 32 related to the provision of an integrated headquarters facility for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, in Baghdad (A/62/828), said that the budget proposals for special political missions for 2009 had once again been grouped into three thematic clusters (cluster I: Special and personal envoys, special advisers and personal representatives of the Secretary-General and Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (A/63/346/Add.1); cluster II: Sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels (A/63/346/Add.2); and cluster III: United Nations offices, peacebuilding support offices, integrated offices and commissions (A/63/346/Add.3)). The budget proposals for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) had been presented in separate addenda (A/63/346/Add.4 and Add.5 respectively). Efforts had been made to ensure that, as far as possible, the format and presentation of the budget proposals for special political missions mirrored those for peacekeeping operations. Such efforts would continue.

2. Sixteen missions were open-ended or had mandates extending into 2009, 2010 or 2011, and one mission was currently under consideration by the General Assembly. It was anticipated that the mandates of the remaining 10 missions would be extended by the Security Council on the basis of reports and requests already submitted or to be submitted to it for periods similar to those approved for 2008 and 2009. The status of each mandate was shown in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/346). Since the issuance of the report, two mandates, for the Panel of Experts concerning the Sudan and the Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire, had already been extended to 15 October 2009 and 31 October 2009, respectively.

3. The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) would be liquidated by 31 December 2008 and the Office of the United Nations Representative to the International Advisory and Monitoring Board was expected to complete its mandate at the same time, although the Security Council was still considering the latter mandate with a view to its possible extension into 2009. The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and the International Independent Investigation Commission were expected to be fully liquidated by the end of June 2009.

4. The total 2009 requirements for the missions presented in the report and its addenda were estimated at $466,844,500 net ($495,435,000 gross). Mission-by-mission figures for existing resources, estimated expenditures to 31 December 2008 and additional requirements for 2009 were presented in table 1 of the report (A/63/346) and detailed under each individual mission and in the supplementary information by cluster contained in the five addenda to the report. Of those total requirements, $5.9 million would be met through the utilization of anticipated unencumbered balances against the amounts already appropriated for 2008. The overall additional requirements sought in the Secretary-General's report would therefore amount to some $460.9 million net ($489.5 million gross). Requirements varied widely between missions, ranging from $628,400 to $168.2 million; those for the two largest missions (UNAMA and UNAMI) accounted for about 70.7 per cent of the total. Aggregate requirements by major component were presented in table 2 of the report (A/63/346).

5. As far as human resources were concerned, a total of 4,526 positions had been requested for 2009, representing a net decrease of 403 positions from the 2008 level as a result of the expected liquidation of the United Nations Mission in Nepal and the International

Independent Investigation Commission in early 2009, as well as that of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the future status process for Kosovo in 2008, and the transformation of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone to the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone. The two largest missions accounted for approximately 70 per cent of the positions sought. Mission-by-mission staffing requirements and changes from 2008 levels were presented in table 3 of the Secretary-General's report (A/63/346).

6. The action required of the General Assembly was set out in paragraph 23 of the report of the Secretary-General. In line with the request contained in paragraph 168 (a) of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/63/593) on the Secretary-General's budget proposals for special political missions, she informed the Committee that approval of the Advisory Committee's recommendations would reduce the total amount required for those missions by $37.3 million net ($39.5 million gross).

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 3 and 32 related to the provision of an integrated headquarters facility for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, in Baghdad (A/62/828) contained a preliminary cost estimate of $98.6 million and relevant project details for the construction of a purpose-built integrated headquarters for UNAMI. Updates on further developments in Iraq since the issuance of that report were provided in the relevant addendum to the Secretary-General's report (A/63/346/Add.5). The action required of the General Assembly, as set out in paragraph 63 of the Secretary-General's report (A/62/828), was updated by the requested action set out in paragraph 23 of the Secretary-General's more recent report (A/63/346).

8. **Ms. McLurg** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report (A/63/593) on the Secretary-General's budget proposals for special political missions for 2009, as well as its report (A/63/601) on the revised estimates relating to the proposed provision of an integrated headquarters facility for UNAMI, said that chapter II of the first report (A/63/593) contained general comments on matters ranging from the definition of a special political mission to the need for improved coordination with other actors in the field and for better presentation of the programmatic and budgetary requirements of those missions. The Advisory Committee noted that efforts had been made to include information on the programme performance of special political missions in 2008, with a focus on the status of achievement of expected accomplishments, but considered that the performance information provided was not sufficiently clear or precise and recommended that future budget submissions should include adequate information on past performance in order to allow a proper analysis of future requirements. It also reiterated the importance of well-founded planning assumptions in the budgeting of special political missions, as well as their vital role in minimizing variances and accurately reflecting the need for resources.

9. The Advisory Committee also noted the absence of a clear definition or modality for the establishment of special political missions. Such missions varied considerably in their mandate, size and duration, ranging from good offices, led by a senior representative of the Secretary-General without a permanent presence in the field, to field missions led by representatives carrying out peacemaking, peacebuilding or monitoring/observation activities or heading integrated missions, sanctions/monitoring bodies based at Headquarters and regional field presences requested to provide an integrated and coordinated approach to multifaceted problems. However, it believed that there was a need for discipline in resorting to special political missions. It had emphasized in the past that proposals of the Secretary-General for the establishment of such missions should be based on an analysis of whether that was the best option under the circumstances. Such analysis was particularly relevant in the case of open-ended mandates. It was also important to ensure that the activities carried out by special political missions were distinct from the ongoing activities of the Department of Political Affairs.

10. The Advisory Committee was concerned that some special political missions could duplicate one another. While complex problems might need multifaceted approaches, efforts should be made to ensure that the functions required could not be carried out by other actors or offices already in the region and that the roles and related functions were clearly

identified so as to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication. The Department of Political Affairs, in exercising its leadership in that regard, should be proactive in pointing out possibilities to streamline arrangements, with a view to introducing efficiency and optimizing the use of resources.

11. The Advisory Committee's report on the revised estimates related to the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs (A/62/7/Add.32), which contained observations and recommendations on the support and management of special political missions, was currently before the General Assembly, together with the Secretary-General's related proposals. The Advisory Committee requested that the comprehensive report which the Secretary-General was to submit to the General Assembly in that connection should include an analysis of the criteria taken into account in establishing special political missions; the basis for proposing the different modalities and structures; the means available for reviewing the missions' activities and performance and for ensuring oversight and accountability; and the mechanisms or benchmarks for recommending the conclusion of a special political mission and the application of lessons learned, either in making future proposals or in managing current special political missions.

12. The Advisory Committee's recommendations and comments on the resources requested for the special political missions in the three thematic clusters, as well as for the larger missions (UNAMA and UNAMI), were contained in chapters III, IV and V of its report (A/63/593). With regard to cluster I, the Advisory Committee noted that the increase in proposed resources mostly related to the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, in view of the additional capacity requested for the expansion of its activities in providing the support requested by the leaders in Cyprus. The Advisory Committee's recommendations on the post and non-post resources proposed by the Secretary-General for cluster I would entail a reduction of $785,000.

13. Turning to cluster II, the Advisory Committee stressed the importance of cooperation and information-sharing, as well as the need to avoid duplication of activities in order to ensure the efficient use of resources, wherever possible. It also noted that the presentation of the resources proposed for consultants under cluster II lacked transparency, since, in many cases, no distinction could be made between the resources requested for experts and consultants. It therefore recommended that the required expertise should be spread among the team of experts/members of the panels themselves, in order to ensure that the technical know-how required for mandate implementation was provided. Consultants should be used for shorter periods and only for very specialized expertise that was not available from one of the experts/members. The Advisory Committee's recommendations for cluster II would entail a reduction of $795,400 in the resources proposed by the Secretary-General.

14. With regard to cluster III, the Advisory Committee pointed out possible changes that could affect the resources proposed by the Secretary-General. The mandate of the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission could be extended by the Security Council, if the Special Tribunal for Lebanon did not become operational as anticipated in 2008, and there was also a possibility that the Security Council could extend the presence of UNMIN for an additional six months, with further adjustments, thus postponing the planned liquidation activities for that Mission. A technical assessment mission was expected to be conducted early in 2009 with a view to proposing options for an integrated United Nations presence in Guinea-Bissau, and the Secretary-General would then submit recommendations to the Security Council. Any budgetary implications arising from a decision by the Council would be presented to the General Assembly for consideration. Furthermore, the resources proposed for the United Nations Political Office for Somalia covered only the first six months of 2009 and, on the basis of a security assessment conducted in the fourth quarter of 2008, a supplementary budget for the remaining six months, including relocation from Nairobi to Mogadishu, was to be presented to the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee recognized the importance of planning for a future United Nations presence in Somalia and emphasized in that regard that lessons drawn from similar past experiences should be utilized.

15. With regard to the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), established by the Security Council for a 12-month period from 1 October 2008 as the follow-on presence to the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, the Advisory Committee recommended acceptance of the proposed staffing and encouraged

UNIPSIL to recruit staff, especially national staff, in an expeditious manner. However, since the vacancy factors applied to the estimates were not, in its opinion, realistic, it recommended that a vacancy factor of 20 per cent for international staff should be applied for 2009 and that the staffing requirements and structure of the Office should be reviewed in the context of the budget submission for 2010, bearing in mind the capacity of the United Nations country team. Turning to the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the Advisory Committee was of the view that the lack of both a workplan and a plan of action more than a year after the Centre's establishment indicated poor planning at the pre-establishment phase. It also considered that some elements of the Centre's terms of reference lacked clarity. The Advisory Committee's recommendations would entail a reduction of $2.5 million in the Secretary-General's overall proposals for the missions under cluster III.

16. The Advisory Committee noted that the Secretary-General's budget proposals for UNAMA for 2009 sought to ensure the Mission's ability to effectively deliver support in the priority areas identified in Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) and the subsequent Paris Declaration by strengthening substantive and administrative capacity through redeployment of current resources or, in some cases, significant staffing increases and restructuring, including the expansion of the Mission's field presence. During the Advisory Committee's consideration of the Secretary-General's report (A/63/346/Add.4), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had provided an update on significant developments in the areas of humanitarian affairs and counter-narcotics since the report had been finalized. Detailed information on those changes and their impact on the proposed resources was included in the Advisory Committee's report (A/63/593).

17. Taking into account the current vacancy situation, the proposed staffing, which reflected an increase of 437 positions, and the prevailing environment, the Advisory Committee recommended that the vacancy factors for international and national staff should be increased and that the Mission's structure and staffing should be kept under review as it was put into operation, bearing in mind the security conditions permitting the deployment of staff to the regional and provincial offices. It also recommended a 10 per cent reduction in the overall resources proposed for operational costs, as delays were likely in the implementation of the Mission's operational workplan. The Advisory Committee's recommendations would entail a reduction of $19 million in the Secretary-General's resource proposals for UNAMA for 2009.

18. With regard to UNAMI, the Advisory Committee noted the Secretary-General's intention for the Mission to reduce its dependence on the Multinational Forces in Iraq and become more self-reliant. It recommended that the General Assembly should request that further information on progress achieved, including the utilization of requested air assets contracted for that purpose, should be provided in future reports of the Secretary-General. At the same time, it noted the intention to expand the United Nations presence in different regions where security remained a major challenge; that could entail additional costs. Its recommendations on posts were made on the premise that Offices should be first established and staffed with capacity already available before requests for additional positions were made. In addition, given the prevailing environment in which the Mission operated, as well as current recruitment experience, the Advisory Committee recommended an increase in the vacancy factors for international and national staff to 35 per cent, instead of the proposed 30 per cent. The practice of not adjusting the mission subsistence allowance for staff members who received life and logistical support should also be re-examined. Taking into account the significant underexpenditures in operating costs during 2008, the Mission's operating environment, the security challenges it faced and the likelihood of delays in implementing the workplan, the Advisory Committee recommended that the proposed operational costs for UNAMI should be reduced by $10 million. Its recommendations would entail a reduction of $16.4 million in the overall resource requirements proposed by the Secretary-General for the Mission for 2009.

19. The recommendations contained in the Advisory Committee's report (A/63/593) would entail an overall reduction of $39.5 million in the resources of $467 million proposed by the Secretary-General for special political missions for 2009.

20. With regard to the revised estimates relating to the proposed provision of an integrated headquarters facility for UNAMI, there had been a number of developments since the issuance of the Secretary-

General's report (A/62/828), including a pledge of $25 million and the provision of a new site by the Government of Iraq. The updated actions required of the General Assembly in the light of those developments were set out in paragraph 22 of the Advisory Committee's related report (A/63/601).

21. Concerning the estimate of $98.6 million for the construction project as a whole, the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should wait until the Secretary-General had submitted the complete proposal before reaching a decision on the overall requirements. Subject to the observations in its report, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of a commitment authority of $5 million to undertake design work in connection with the proposed United Nations integrated compound in Baghdad.

22. **Ms. Pataca** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the agenda item under consideration was of particular importance to the Group, since 13 out of the 27 special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly or the Security Council related directly to African countries. The Group looked forward to seeing those missions achieve their ultimate goals and objectives, leading to lasting peace, security and stability in the region.

23. While only one of the 27 missions whose requirements were set out in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/346) had been established by the General Assembly, the Assembly was required to provide adequate resources for those established by other bodies. The Group therefore considered it vital that every proposal for the establishment of a special political mission should be based on an in-depth analysis, with full justification of the urgency and feasibility of establishing such a mission, taking into account the existence and mandates of other United Nations actors working in the region.

24. The Secretary-General's reports on special political missions mainly provided information on the resources requested for those missions; although efforts had been made to follow the format and presentation of budgets for peacekeeping operations, as requested by the General Assembly, the Group concurred with the Advisory Committee that future budget submissions should include adequate information on past performance in order to allow a proper analysis of future requirements and sound justification of any increase in resource requirements. That would also provide for management accountability and allow General Assembly oversight. The Group therefore called on the Secretariat to make every effort to ensure that budget submissions adhered to the relevant provisions of the General Assembly resolution on results-based budgeting and, in particular, reflected expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement.

25. The requested resources for the missions suggested that the Secretariat relied heavily on services provided by consultants, even though the United Nations was assumed to have appropriate in-house expertise. Recourse to external consultants' services should be the exception rather than the rule. Lastly, the Secretariat should take remedial measures to address the failure to appoint nationals to Professional posts, particularly in the African special political missions.

26. **Mr. Poulin** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, noted that the proposed additional appropriation for special political missions for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2009 amounted to $460,921,500 and was additional to the $403,910,100 already appropriated for those missions. Excluding the provision for an integrated headquarters facility for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the sum concerned was approximately double that originally sought by the Secretary-General in his estimate for the biennium 2008-2009.

27. While the constantly changing operational environments of special political missions made their budgets difficult to forecast precisely, and while Member States should appreciate the complexity of the Organization's functions, the Secretary-General should provide special political mission budget forecasts for the entire biennium that were as accurate as possible. There could be merit in separating special political missions from the rest of the regular budget in order to accommodate the fluctuations involved, to increase budgetary transparency and to provide a more accurate picture of the budgetary situation.

28. The three delegations concurred with the Advisory Committee's view that special political missions should provide temporary capacity in response to a mandate from the General Assembly or the Security Council, while activities of an ongoing nature should be financed through the appropriation for the Department of Political Affairs, thereby increasing

budgetary transparency and improving accountability in the activities of that Department and the special political missions.

29. The extension of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) would enable it to lead the international civilian effort in that country. The clear link between the resource requirements in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/346/Add.4) and the Mission's mandate and operational realities was positive. The three delegations were aware of the challenges presented by the volatile environment of the Mission, and would like clarification of the potential impact of the Advisory Committee recommendations aimed at reducing the appropriation for operational costs. They looked forward to a more in-depth discussion of new humanitarian affairs arrangements within the Mission with representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs during the informal consultations.

30. The three delegations favoured the strengthening of the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, and trusted that, with his additional resources, the Special Adviser would be in a position to provide effective support for both sides to reach a satisfactory solution, moving towards a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, as defined by relevant Security Council resolutions.

31. Noting the Secretary-General's request for funding for a purpose-built integrated headquarters for UNAMI to ensure the long-term safety and security of United Nations staff serving in Baghdad, the delegations expressed their sympathies to the families of the United Nations contractors killed in a rocket attack in November 2008, looked forward to a comprehensive proposal for the construction of the compound in Baghdad, and noted that its costs would be shared with the Government of Iraq. The proposal for the project should be based on sound analysis and should contain assurances that the established time frame and resources would not be exceeded.

32. Finally, the three delegations regretted that, as in previous years, the General Assembly had been forced to consider complex proposals for special political missions only a few days before the end of the main part of the session, preventing it from fully discharging its oversight responsibility. They trusted that the situation would be clarified in the informal consultations.

33. **Mr. Mukai** (Japan), recalling that the General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 62/238 V, had requested the Secretary-General to present budget proposals for special political missions no later than the first week of November, said that his delegation had expected to be given reasonable time to consider the proposals concerned. It regretted their presentation to the Committee in the very last week of the session, repeating the pattern of previous years. The Member States were thus once again forced to make hasty decisions under pressure.

34. With special political missions currently accounting for nearly 20 per cent of the programme budget for 2008-2009, having increased substantially in cost from $94 million in 2002 to $436 million in 2008, his delegation noted that the resource request for 2009 represented a 12 per cent increase over the 2008 sum. When examining the efficiency and effectiveness of special political missions, the relevant legislative bodies, including the Security Council, should take account of costs.

35. His delegation would like the Secretary-General to clarify what constituted a special political mission. If, as suggested in paragraph 11 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/63/593), such missions' activities were directed towards operational matters and, as such, did not lend themselves to full integration with the work programme of the Secretariat, he wondered why the Secretary-General was proposing special political missions with no time limit, as in the case of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, and why the functions of the United Nations Office for West Africa did not fit within the work programme.

36. Concurring with the views expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 11 and 12 of its report, his delegation would like an analysis to be undertaken to determine whether establishing a special political mission was the best option under particular circumstances. Only through such careful scrutiny could the Secretary-General implement the complex mandates of peace operations in a cost-effective way.

37. As the General Assembly had requested in paragraph 6 of its resolution 62/238 V, the functions and responsibilities of special envoys, special representatives and other special high-level positions

should be more clearly defined and streamlined. His delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations regarding the establishment and management of special political missions, and looked forward to receiving the comprehensive report expected from the Secretary-General on those matters.

38. His delegation supported the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 7 to 10 of its report, believing that they would improve the presentation of future budgets and enable Member States to better analyse resource requirements. The presentation and justification of resource requirements for special political missions should be no less rigorous than in the case of peacekeeping missions. Consideration should be given to requiring the submission of performance reports for certain missions every year, to enable the Member States to evaluate their programme performance properly. Despite the difficult and unusual circumstances under which some special political missions operated, it was important for the Secretary-General to propose realistic budgets, to enable the finite resources of the Member States to be allocated in an optimal manner. His delegation wished to know whether the 2009 budget proposals for special political missions had been adjusted in light of the experience gained during the previous year, particularly to incorporate more realistic vacancy rates and operational costs.

39. His delegation strongly encouraged the Secretary-General to intensify efforts to find scope for collaboration and complementarity among special political missions, peacekeeping operations and other United Nations activities, such as in the case of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, whose geographic and substantive responsibilities overlapped with those of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. It would like more information on the progress made in ensuring systemic cooperation among the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in order to prevent duplication of effort, in line with the request made by the General Assembly in paragraph 4 of its resolution 62/238 V.

40. The provisional amounts set aside for special political missions in the current and previous budget outlines had failed to give an accurate forecast of the overall requirements of those missions during the previous and current bienniums. For example, the 2008-2009 budget outline had provided for $604 million for the biennium, but the actual requirements for 2008-2009 exceeded $925 million. While recognizing that estimated resource requirements could change if the missions' mandates were extended, his delegation felt that consideration should be given to ensuring a more accurate forecast of the overall requirements for the entire two-year period of the programme budget. To ensure budgetary discipline and sound management, special political missions should remain part of the regular budget.

41. His delegation supported a number of the Advisory Committee's specific recommendations regarding resource requirements for the 27 special political missions, but considered a further reduction of up to 15 per cent appropriate in many cases. The report of the Secretary-General had indicated significant underexpenditure in relation to the 2008 appropriations for many missions, including UNAMI. Budget allocations should normally be based on the pattern of expenditure in the previous year.

42. The recruitment and deployment of staff should be carefully planned and phased, based on realistic assumptions and an accurate understanding of the security situation in each location. His delegation wished to be assured that the ongoing activities of United Nations entities other than the Secretariat — particularly in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia — would not be hindered in any way by premature deployment of the additional resources requested for special political missions in those countries.

43. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that one of the Secretary-General's most important roles was the use of good offices in order to address international conflicts in an independent and impartial manner. Good offices helped to preserve international peace and security in accordance with Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations. Qatar therefore consistently supported allocating resources to good offices missions.

44. Moreover, those missions were not limited to matters within the purview of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Political situations sometimes required urgent intervention by the Secretary-General. Such support for political processes helped to prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts that required a peacekeeping mission. The Secretary-General's good offices had had positive

effects on peace processes in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

45. The Secretariat also had a part to play in supporting regional and subregional organizations. In that connection, his delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General for endorsing Qatar's efforts to convene peace talks between the parties to the Sudan conflict, pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter. That initiative had been called for by a resolution of the League of Arab States, and was being organized in cooperation with the African Union and the African Union-United Nations Joint Chief Mediator.

46. The budget proposals currently under consideration for special political missions amounted to over $466 million. That figure represented an increase of 7 per cent over the 2008 appropriation. His delegation believed that the increase in tensions and conflicts around the world justified such expenditure. It was important to ensure that in the second half of the biennium, the Secretariat could carry out the 27 special political missions authorized by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Lastly, in filling the positions referred to in the report of the Secretary-General, due consideration should be given to equitable geographic distribution and to the countries that had authorized and supported the missions.

47. **Mr. Traystman** (United States of America) expressed his delegation's overall support for the Secretary-General's proposals regarding the resource requirements for special political missions, which provided critical country- and region-specific initiatives to maintain peace and security. He wished to make some general comments, to be followed by more specific requests for clarification in the informal consultations.

48. His delegation had noted the Advisory Committee's concern that the budget proposals in question at times failed to supply enough accompanying justification to enable the General Assembly to make informed decisions. It supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that more precise justification should be provided in the future and would like to know how plans to improve coordination with other actors and other members of United Nations country teams would affect the proposed requirements. However, in his delegation's view, the Advisory Committee had itself failed to justify its recommendations in a way that enabled the General Assembly to make informed decisions on them. That was the case, for example, of the recommended 10 per cent overall reduction in the operational costs of UNAMA. Finally, as it was important that progress should be made on the project for a purpose-built integrated headquarters for UNAMI, his delegation hoped that the related funding would be approved rapidly.

49. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) recalled that the resource requirements being considered by the Committee included those for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). His delegation believed that positive developments had occurred since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 62/238 V. The resumption in Lebanon of the political process known as the national dialogue, as well as the recent developments in relations between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, especially following the summit meeting of the Lebanese and Syrian Presidents, including progress achieved in the establishment of diplomatic relations and the decision to set up permanent diplomatic missions, were issues that related to the mandate of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), as confirmed by the Security Council in its resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006) and the related statements of its President.

50. Those positive developments attested to the validity of his delegation's consistent position since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) that Lebanon considered the Syrian Arab Republic a sister country. They also attested to Lebanon's commitment to continue strengthening its relations with the Syrian Arab Republic in the face of the two countries' common challenges. That commitment had been clearly manifested when, in the 2006 national dialogue, the Lebanese people, represented by all their political groups, had unanimously called for the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic and for the resolution of all pending issues between the two sisterly countries, including the delineation of their common borders.

51. Over and above those developments, the long-standing position of his delegation was that the violations of Lebanese sovereignty by Israel and the continued Israeli occupation of Lebanese lands fell within the mandate of the Special Envoy of the

Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). His delegation had repeatedly emphasized that reports on the financing of special political missions should reflect the Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty as part of the indicators of achievement of the logical framework of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). In fact, all of the Special Envoy's reports to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) had referred to Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty. Accordingly, the logical framework for that Special Envoy's mandate should reflect the developments he had outlined and the violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

52. **Mr. Amin** (Afghanistan) said that, following 25 years of war and conflict imposed from outside the country, and six years of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan must cope with heavily damaged physical infrastructure and a significant loss of human life. Al-Qaida had used Afghan territory to organize its global terrorist activities and had supported the Taliban in installing a regime of fear that had brutally repressed the population. With the assistance of the United Nations and the international community, great progress had been made since 2001.

53. The primary goal of the Afghan Government was to establish a stable constitutional, democratic State with effective institutions able to help people to rebuild their lives and their country after decades of war. That goal could not be accomplished without the help and support of the international community. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) had successfully coordinated the efforts of the international community and supported the Afghan Government's ownership of the reconstruction process, without which results would be neither stable nor sustainable. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General had become a trusted presence in that connection. As UNAMA required additional staff and support, and more specialized expertise, in order to discharge its responsibilities effectively, his delegation was fully in favour of the proposed budget increase for the coming year.

54. The elections scheduled for 2009 and 2010 would be the first to be administered by the Afghan authorities since the 1970s. UNAMA was providing the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission with essential assistance for voter registration. Successful elections would reaffirm the legitimacy of the Afghan Government and would be a necessary step in creating a prosperous and peaceful society for all Afghans. With greater coordination capacity, UNAMA would be better able to help ensure the success of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

55. Afghanistan's existing humanitarian challenges had been aggravated by the harshest winter in 30 years, combined with lack of capacity on the part of the Government. Poverty and lack of access to food, medical care and education remained major obstacles to equitable and sustainable development. Despite significant progress in some areas, Afghanistan still had the second-highest maternal mortality rate in the world, and 42 per cent of its people still lived in extreme poverty.

56. With almost 2,000 NGOs, 20 international organizations and 41 troop-contributing countries all trying to work together in Afghanistan, coordination was essential for ensuring national ownership of recovery efforts and building national capacity. The Government would support UNAMA, which had proved itself capable of a larger role in the stabilization process.

57. **Mr. Jölle** (Norway) said that special political missions and the good offices of the Secretary-General played an important role in maintaining international peace and security. Negotiation, investigation, mediation, conciliation and cooperation with regional organizations were vital tools in conflict prevention and resolution. Norway attached particular importance to UNAMA, which had a mandate from the Security Council and the unanimous support of the General Assembly. In its recent resolution 63/18, the Assembly had encouraged UNAMA to consolidate its presence and continue its expansion. His delegation therefore supported the Advisory Committee's conclusion that the staffing changes proposed for 2009 responded to the priorities contained in Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) and the Paris Declaration of June 2008.

58. **Ms. Ataeva** (Turkmenistan), speaking on behalf of the five Central Asian States regarding the financing of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, said that the Centre had spent the year since its establishment actively assisting the Governments of the region with cooperation and development matters and preventing conflict. It supported permanent contacts between Central Asian

Governments and worked with regional organizations, thereby building its capacity to avert conflict through dialogue. The Security Council had received reports on, and lent its support to, the Centre's activities.

59. The Centre's activities involved extensive travel within and outside the region and the holding of meetings and conferences. That activity and mobility had enabled the Centre's staff to establish the necessary contacts and to further understanding in the region. The Centre's key functions, as described in chapter II, section H, of the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/346/Add.3), involved considerable responsibility and required financial and human resources. The resource requirements contained in paragraphs 127 and 131 of the report, particularly the request for six additional positions, including a Political Affairs Officer, would enable the Centre to work more actively, building contacts with regional organizations, especially those dealing with matters connected with Afghanistan. The five Governments of the region shared the view that the Secretary-General's resource proposals deserved support.

60. **Ms. Van Buerle** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that, with regard to the presentation of budget proposals for special political missions no later than the first week of November, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/238 V, all the relevant reports had been submitted between 11 September and 27 October 2008, with the exception of the report on the construction of an integrated headquarters facility for UNAMI in Baghdad, which had been submitted on 5 May 2008.

61. The working assumption of the Secretariat, in the absence of a legislative definition of what constituted a special political mission, was that such missions contained a strong peace and security element, usually resulted from mandates conferred by the General Assembly or the Security Council and involved no military contingents and very few or no military or civilian police personnel. In the case of the Security Council, mandates resulted either from a resolution or from an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the President of the Council. The establishment of a special political mission could be approved at any point during the course of a particular biennium.

62. Estimates of resource requirements for special political missions had for a number of years been based on the resource levels provided for such missions in the current biennium. The estimates for the biennium 2008-2009 had been based on the resources approved for special political missions in 2006-2007, with the deduction of provisions for missions that had been or were expected to be discontinued. Many special political missions experienced a significant increase in activity as they progressed, but such changes were impossible to predict when resource estimates were established.

Other matters

63. **Mr. Hunte** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and recalling the provisions of General Assembly resolution 56/253, said that his Group wished to make a formal request to the Bureau of the Committee for the introduction and discussion in the Committee of the matter of rental of premises for the Group's secretariat.

64. **The Chairman** said that the Bureau had taken note of the request made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.